

THE ORIGIN AND OUTCOME
OF THE LITURGIES
OF JOHN WESLEY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	page
INTRODUCTION	1
1. The Patristic Influences	3
Liturgical Comparisons	
A. The Lord's Supper	13
B. Baptism	16
C. The Service of the Word	19
D. Ordination	22
Conclusion	25
2. The Anglican Influences	26
Liturgical Comparisons	
A. The Lord's Supper	30
B. Baptism	35
C. The Service of the Word	38
D. The Ordinal	41
3. The Wesleyan Innovations	47
A. Hymns	49
1. The use of hymns to enrich the liturgy	54
2. The use of hymns as didactic tools	54
3. The language of the hymns	56
B. Hymns in the Eucharist	57
C. Extempore Preaching	59
D. Extempore Prayer	63
E. The Love-feast	65
F. The Watchnight	66
G. The Covenant Service	67

4. United Methodist vs. Wesleyan Liturgy	70
Liturgical Comparisons	
A. Holy Communion	76
B. Service of the Word - Sermon	79
C. Hymns	81
CONCLUSION	84
BIBLIOGRAPHY	87

ABSTRACT

John Wesley, (1703 - 1791), the founder of the movement called Methodism, made a substantial contribution to liturgy by the development of independent formularies for his constituents in America. Wesley was not unique in his search of patristic writings; the study of early Christian sources was the preoccupation of many eighteenth century religious intellectualists. Wesley's uniqueness lies in the application of patristic, Moravian, Non-jurist and Anglican traditions to his own pragmatic ends.

This study shows how Wesley synthesized major doctrinal and didactic ritual elements to produce orders for Morning Worship, Holy Communion, Baptism and Ordination which reflect both Roman Catholic tradition and Protestant convictions.

Wesley's ideals were transmitted by his followers to America early in the nineteenth century, but except in urban churches his formularies seldom were practiced.

During the first one hundred years of Methodism, when it was identified predominantly as a rural religion, Wesley's liturgies lay largely dormant; the urban churches of the mid-twentieth century have acknowledged Wesley's contributions while ignoring his methods. If Methodism is to remain faithful to the ideals of its founder, Wesley's formularies must appear not only in the Hymnbook and the Order of Worship but in practice.

INTRODUCTION

One of the outstanding contributions to religion in the eighteenth century arose from John Wesley's desire to reform the Anglican liturgies. His avowed purposes were to bring the Anglican rites into closer conformity with what he called "Scriptural Christianity", and to furnish suitable rituals for the pioneer churches of the People called Methodists on the North American continent. In 1784 Wesley formulated a liturgy for the American Methodists entitled, The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America. This and other liturgies by him amalgamated elements from the Primitive Church liturgies as Wesley induced them from his reading of Patristic literature, The Book of Common Prayer, and Wesley's own innovations. The Sunday Service culminated fifty years of liturgical experimentation and formulation. This liturgy was rejected by the American Methodists for a variety of reasons, and with its loss much of Wesley's desire to increase the life of God in the life of man through liturgical reform was lost.

The purposes of this study are to determine: (1) what were Wesley's liturgical intentions; (2) what lasting changes, if any, resulted from the innovations which he made in the established Anglican liturgies; (3) how these alterations were received and applied by the People called Methodists in America; and (4) if Wesley's notions were permanently valid how can they be renewed in the liturgies of the United Methodist Church today.

The following delimitations are established for the project. The United Methodist Church is a polyglot denomination, a product of

numerous separations and mergers, therefore only the eclectic mainstream of Methodism is considered. The study examines only Wesley's liturgical formularies, the Patristic and Anglican influences upon it and his own innovations. The liturgical areas examined are limited to the sacraments, the Service of the Word and ordination.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PATRISTIC INFLUENCES

Thomas Deacon, an eighteenth century patristics scholar and one of John Wesley's mentors, wrote a book entitled, Complete Collection of Devotions, taken from the Apostolic Constitutions, the Ancient Liturgies, and the Common Prayer Book of the Church of England. Deacon included in his preface two principles which Wesley accepted with characteristic enthusiasm:

1st. That the best method for all churches and Christians to follow, is to lay aside all modern hypotheses, customs, and private opinions, and to submit to all the doctrines, practices, worship and discipline, not of any particular, but of the ancient and universal church of Christ from the beginning to the end of the fourth century; which doctrines, practice, worship and discipline, thus universally and constantly received, could not possibly be derived from any other apostolic authority.

2ndly. That the liturgy in the Apostolic Constitutions is the most ancient Christian liturgy extant; that it is perfectly pure and free from interpolation; and that the book itself called the Apostolical Constitutions contains at large the doctrines, laws, and settlements which the three first and present ages of the gospel did with one consent believe, obey, and submit to, and that as derived to them from apostolical men...

Deacon added: "If these two principles were once put in practice, all the ecclesiastical distractions which subsist at present would cease; and a truly catholic union would be restored among all Christian churches."¹

1. Frank Baker, John Wesley and the Church of England, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1970), p.33.

Wesley later rejected the second of these principles, but he remained loyal to the first all his life.

Deacon enlisted Wesley's help in the preparation of Devotions and included in that book excerpts from the latter's "An Essay Upon the Stationary Fasts". Wesley returned from his study with Deacon full of enthusiasm for the beliefs and practices of the ancient church, and thereafter he constantly advocated study of the writings of the Patrists. In an "Address to the Clergy" in 1756, he wrote:

Can any who spend several years in those seats of learning (the universities) be excused if they do not add to that of the languages and sciences, the knowledge of the fathers--the most authentic commentators on Scripture, as being both nearest the fountain and eminently endued with that Spirit by whom "all Scripture was given."...I speak chiefly of those who wrote before the Council of Nicea. But who would not likewise desire to have some acquaintance with those that followed them--with St. Chrysostom, Basil, Jerome, Austin, and above all, the man of a broken heart, Ephream Syrus?²

Wesley's interest in and devotion to the primitive church began while he was still a child. Many friends of his family were Non-jurors who devoted their lives to the revival of "true religion" in the Church of England.³ Their common interest was "their rootage in a

2. John Wesley, Works (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), X.

3. The Non-juring movement had its origin in the 17th century. Their vision was of a Church of England that was both "Reformed and Catholic." They sought to purge the Church of abuse in Doctrine and liturgy by reaching back to the Primitive Church. They refused to take the oath of allegiance to the House of Orange after 1688, hence the title cf. Trevor Dearing, Wesleyan and Tractarian Worship (London: Epworth Press, 1966)

Christian tradition more primitive than the corruptions of the 'papists' or the exaggerations of the 'protestants'." ⁴ It was natural, then, that Wesley should develop a deep and enduring interest in the records of the primitive church.

Wesley did not begin serious study of the patristic writings until he was a student at Oxford and a member of the Holy Club. With the assistance of a fellow "Methodist", one John Clayton, who was also a competent patristics scholar, Wesley began reading Early Christian literature. He was familiar with Robert Nelson's Festivals and Fasts and other studies of primitive Christianity; with Clayton's help, he was able to read the writings of the early Christians, Macarius and Ephrean of Syria. Outler notes that what Wesley thought were the works of Macarius were most likely the writings of Gregory of Nyssa. He wrote:

What matters most in connection with Wesley is that in the writings of what he thought was Macarius the Egyptian he was actually in touch with Gregory of Nyssa, the greatest of all the eastern Christian teachers of the quest for perfection. Thus, in his early days, he drank deep of this Byzantine tradition of spirituality at its source and assimilated its conception of devotion as the *way* and perfection as the *goal* of the Christian life. ⁵

The importance of Outler's assertion is readily apparent: it is the Eastern tradition of holiness as *disciplined* love that becomes

4. Albert Outler, John Wesley (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 45

5. Ibid., p. 9.

fused in Wesley's mind with the Anglican tradition of holiness as *aspiring* love. This idea later developed into what Wesley regarded as his most important doctrinal contribution, namely, Christian perfection.⁶ In a letter written to Robert Carr Brackenbury, (September 1790), Wesley noted: "This doctrine is the grand depositum which God lodged with the people called Methodists, and for the sake of propagating this chiefly he appears to have raised us up."⁷ With Wesley as spiritual leader, the Holy Club adopted his interest in the Church Fathers; together they studied the ancient liturgies and monastic piety of the fourth century desert fathers.⁸

Wesley's fascination with ancient liturgies continued during his tenure in Georgia, (1735 - 1738), and it is almost certain that during this time he did the major part of his experimentation with liturgy. One memorandum notes that he spent over three hours revising the Book of Common Prayer so that the liturgical practices more closely resembled genuine apostolic procedure.⁹

Two members of the Holy Club sailed to Georgia with Wesley. A layman already there joined them and together they formed what Baker has called, "a monastic cell". They resolved to rise early, to spend the first hour in prayer, the second in Bible study, and the third in reading something related to the primitive church.¹⁰

6. Ibid., p. 10.

7. John Wesley, "Duty of Constant Communion", in his Works, VII, 154-5.

8. Outler, p. 8.

9. Baker, p. 40.

10. Ibid.

The Club planned to experiment with worship while they were in Georgia. They hoped to incorporate some specific methods of the primitive church into primitive colony.¹¹ One of the most impressive study guides used was the two-volume folio of William Beveridge's Pandectae, which contained numerous examples of ancient Eastern liturgical texts.

In a memorandum which may have been written while he was in or en route to Savannah, Wesley recorded the following liturgical rules in accordance with primitive church practice:

I believe (myself) it a duty to observe, so far as I can (without breaking communion with my own Church):

1. To baptize by immersion.
2. To use Water, oblation of elements, alms, invocation, a prothesis, in the Eucharist.
3. To pray for the faithful departed.
4. To pray standing on Sunday and in Pentecost.
5. To observe Saturday, Sunday, and Pentecost as festival.
6. To abstain from blood and things strangled.

I think it prudent (our own church not considered):

1. To observe the stations.
2. Lent, especially the Holy Week.¹²
3. To turn to the east at the Creed.

August Gottlieb Spanenberg, a Moravian leader, had occasion to meet with Wesley frequently while they were both in Georgia. He recorded the following in his diary:

11. Ibid.

12. Outler, pp. 12-13.

He (Wesley) has moreover several quite special principles, which he still holds strongly since he drank them in his mother's milk. He thinks that an ordination not performed by a bishop in the apostolic succession is invalid...He will therefore not share the Lord's Supper with anyone who is not baptized by a minister who has been ordained by a true bishop. All these doctrines derive from the view of the episcopacy which is held in the Papist and English churches and which rests upon the authority of the Fathers. Above all he believes that all references in Scripture of doubtful interpretation must be decided not by reason but from the writings of the first three centuries, e.g. infant baptism, footwashing, fast days, celibacy and many others.¹³

At this point in his life Wesley had reached an extreme position concerning the authority of the Church Fathers: their warrant was second only to the Scriptures; reason rested as a poor third.¹⁴

Wesley's liturgical experimentation was not successful in Georgia. In his journal he recorded one conversation that took place in Frederica:

Observing much coldness in Mr. ----'s behaviour, I asked him the reason of it. He answered, "I like nothing you do. All of your sermons are satires upon particular persons, therefore I will never hear you more; and all the people are of my mind, for we won't hear ourselves abused.

Beside, they say, they are Protestants. But as for you, they cannot tell what religion you are of. They never heard of such a religion before. They do not know what to make of it. And then your private behaviour--All the quarrels that have been here since you came, have been long of you. Indeed there is neither man nor woman in the town, who minds a word you say. And so you may preach long enough; but nobody will come to hear you.¹⁵

13. Baker, pp. 42-43.

14. Ibid.

15. John Wesley, Journal (London: Epworth Press, 1938), I, 32-33.

Just before Wesley left Georgia he was brought before a Grand Jury; eight of the twelve charges against him involved liturgical or ecclesiastical affairs. The conflict involved Wesley's interpretation of primitive church terms and practices. For example, charge twelve read: "By calling himself 'Ordinary' and thereby claiming a jurisdiction which we believe is not due him and whereby we should be precluded from access to redress by any superior jurisdiction."¹⁶

Outler attributes this charge to a misunderstanding of the term Ordinary. Wesley interpreted Ordinary to mean "pastor-in-charge" from the Greek word meaning "abbott" as in the tradition of the ancient church. His critics probably understood the term to mean "bishop" which would have meant that Wesley was assuming ordinal authority.¹⁷

One of Wesley's critics, Patrick Tailfer, gives insight into the liturgy Wesley must have used in the Georgia colony. He writes:

The reverend gentleman...frequently declared that he never desired to see Georgia a rich, but a religious Colony. At last all persons of any consideration came to look upon him as a Roman Catholic, for which the following reasons seem pretty convincing:

1st. Under an affected strict adherence to the Church of England, he most unmercifully damned all Dissenters...

2ndly...Persons suspected to be Roman Catholics were received and caressed by him as First-rate Saints.

16. Ibid., I, 56.

17. Outler, p. 13.

3rdly...A third confirmation of this suspicion arose from his endeavors to establish the Confession, Penance, Mortifications, mixing wine with water in the Sacrament...; by appointing Deaconesses, with sundry other innovations, which he called Apostolic Constitutions.¹⁸

Wesley steadfastly defended himself against charges and criticisms, insisting that he had acted in accordance with the rubrics of the Church of England and in the spirit of the primitive church which represented "genuine Christianity". It is interesting to note that by the time charges were brought against Wesley he had become somewhat disillusioned with the practices of the primitive church as outlined in the Apostolic Constitutions. This has been attributed to his continued study of William Beveridge's Pandectae, which convinced him "that both particular and general Councils may err, and have erred; and that things ordained by them as necessary to salvation have neither strength nor authority, unless they be taken out of holy Scripture".¹⁹

This does not mean that Wesley looked no longer to the primitive church as a source of authority; it does mean that from ca. 1736 he ceased "making antiquity a co-ordinate rather than subordinate rule with scripture", with admitting several doubtful writings as undoubted evidences of antiquity, "with extending antiquity too far, even to the middle or end of the fourth century", and with "believing more practices to have been universal in the ancient church than were ever so."²⁰

18. Baker, p. 45.

19. Wesley, Journal, I. 40.

20. Ibid.

Wesley now became more selective and discriminating in his reliance upon primitive church authority.

By 1749 Wesley's disillusionment with Apostolic Constitutions was complete and he wrote that the work was "spurious". He had been influenced by Bishop Stillingfleet's Irenicum and Lord King's "An Inquiry into the Constitution, Discipline, Unity and Worship of the Primitive Church, that flourished three hundred years after Christ; faithfully collected out of the extant writings of those ages." Both works helped Wesley formulate his doctrine of episcopacy. Baker notes that it also may have been Wesley's study of Irenicum that made him realize fully that the Apostolic Constitutions were not what they purported to be. Stillingfleet referred to Daille's De Pseudepigraphis Apostolicis of 1653 as having "everlastingly blasted the credit of the Constitutions."²¹

Regarding the issue of the primacy of authority of the primitive church Wesley wavered frequently. His stance seems to have depended upon whose work he was studying at the moment. But the fact remains that many of his doctrinal formularies and liturgical practices were influenced by the primitive church.

His reverential attitude toward the early Christian church is stated succinctly in his letter (1749) to Conyers Middleton, a well-known intellectualist, who published A Free Inquiry into the Miraculous Powers which are Supposed to have Subsisted in the Christian Church

21. Baker, p. 371, citing Bishop Stillingfleet.

from the Earliest Ages through Several Successive Centuries...Middleton's apparent aim in this document was to contradict the doctrinal authority of "Christian antiquity."²²

The conclusion of Wesley's reply to Middleton reads as follows:

All this may also be allowed concerning the primitive Fathers. I mean particularly Clemens Romanus, Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Origen, Clement Alexandrinus, Cyprian; to who I would add Macarius and Ephream Syrus.

I allow that some of them had not strong natural sense, that few of them had much learning, and none of them an assistance which our age enjoys in some respects above all that went before.

Hence I doubt not that whoever will be at the pains of reading over their writings for that poor end will find many mistakes, many weak suppositions, and many well-drawn conclusions.

And yet I exceedingly reverence them as well as their writings, because they describe true, genuine Christianity, and direct us to the strongest evidence of Christian doctrine.

Indeed, in addressing the heathen of those times they intermix other arguments--particularly that drawn from the numerous miracles which were then performed in the church, which they needed only to open their eyes and see daily wrought in the face of the sun...

I reverence these ancient Christians (with all their failings) the more, because I see so few Christians now; because I read so little in the writings of later times and hear so little, of genuine Christianity; and because most of the modern Christians (so called), not content with being wholly ignorant of it, are deeply prejudiced against it, calling it "enthusiasm" and I know not what.²³

22. Outler, p. 181.

23. Ibid., p. 183ff, citing John Wesley.

LITURGICAL COMPARISONS

A. The Lord's Supper

John Wesley believed that his most important contribution to doctrinal formulary was the idea of Christian perfection and that his formulation of this doctrine was strongly influenced by the ancient Fathers. The only way for man to be happy was to be like God in holiness; God knew that man could not obtain or supererogate this himself so he gave man certain means of obtaining holiness.²⁴ These aids were "instruments of grace" which should be present in the liturgy. Fasting, hearing the Word and the Scriptures, and prayer are all effective means of grace and are essential to the Service of Worship. Wesley believed that the most effectual means of grace was present in the Lord's Supper and, therefore, Holy Communion should be received "constantly".²⁵ This rubric was concomitant with what Wesley believed to be at the heart of primitive practice. In the "Duty of Constant Communion" he wrote:

Let everyone, therefore, who has any desire to please God, or any love of his own soul, obey God, and consult the good of his own soul, by communing every time he can--like the first Christians, with whom the Christian sacrifice was a constant

24. Wesley, "The Duty of Constant Communion," p.150.

25. Ole Borgen, John Wesley on the Sacraments, (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1972), p.15.

part of the Lord's-day service. And for several centuries they received it almost every day: four times a week always, and every saint's day beside. Accordingly, those that joined the prayers of the faithful never failed to partake of the blessed sacrament. What opinion they had of any who turned his back upon it, we may learn from that ancient canon: "If any believer join in the prayers of the faithful, and go away without receiving the Lord's Supper, let him be excommunicated, as bringing confusion into the Church of God."²⁶ (Outler: Cf. Canon II of the Dedication Council of Antioch: All who enter the Church of God and hear the Holy Scriptures but do not communicate with the people in prayers, or who turn away, by reason of some disorder, from partaking of the Holy Supper, are to be cast out of the Church. p. 336)

Wesley's notion that the primitive church received Holy Communion daily was erroneous; as the following first or second century sources indicate:

On the day of the Sun all who live in towns or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the Apostles or the writings of the prophets are read as long as time permits. Then when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs and exhorts to the imitation of the good examples cited. Then all use together, and prayers are offered. At length as we have already described, prayer being ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president offers prayer and thanksgiving to the best of his ability, and the people assent by saying "Amen": and the distribution is made to each one of his share of the elements which have been blessed.²⁷

The Didache states: "And on the Lord's day of the Lord come together and break bread, and give thanks, after confessing your

26. Wesley, "The Duty of Constant Communion", pp. 148-9.

27. L. Duchesne, Christian Worship, (London: S.P.C.K., 1956), citing Justin Martyr, Apology I

transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure."²⁸

It is clear that the primitive church received Holy Communion weekly, not "constant communion" as Wesley assumed. Nonetheless, he never altered his opinion; as late as 1777, he affirmed, "I administered the Lord's Supper every morning after the example of the primitive church."²⁹

Wesley instituted two practices which had been deleted from the liturgy by the Church of England; again these were practices which he thought were ancient practice. In "Thoughts Upon Methodism: he notes: "From the beginning men and women sat apart as they always did in the Primitive Church."³⁰ He felt that the separation of the sexes contributed to the preservation of order and decency. Wesley also instituted the practice of collecting alms at the Eucharist; opining that the primitive church had originated it. (Supra Revisions of Book of Common Prayer, item #2, p. 7).

A third Eucharistic practice of Wesley's was rooted in ancient liturgy, namely, the singing of Eucharistic hymns. The Wesleys wrote and used hymns as a primary means of conveying Scripture and doctrine in all their services; but Dearing notes that, in addition, "Wesley was the originator of the sung Eucharist in which ancient hymns contained

28. F.E.Warren, Liturgy of the Ante-Nicene Church (London:S.P.C.K., 1897), p. 115.

29. Dearing, p. 9.

30. John Wesley, "Thoughts Upon Methodism," in his Works, XIII, 258.

in the Liturgy are set to 'modern music' and rendered by the whole congregation."³¹ The congregational hymn of free composure was thus subsumed in the liturgy as a means of grace.

B. Baptism

In Wesley's thought, the sacrament of Baptism was important, in part because it was a sacrament and therefore another means of receiving grace, but the topic of baptism occupies less space in his writings than does the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Often Wesley seems to have been more concerned with the means of baptism than with why it was to be administered. While he was in Georgia he was particularly strict about the proper means of baptism; the rite must be conducted by a priest of episcopal ordination. Wesley refused the Lord's Supper to those who had not been properly baptized, he refused to bury people who had not been properly baptized, and he re-baptized children of Dissenters.³²

In his early years as a priest Wesley insisted on baptism by immersion, accompanied by the Sign of the Cross on the forehead of the recipient of the rite, (cf. Book of Common Prayer). Only a person who was physically unable to be immersed was permitted baptism by affusion. Wesley believed this restriction to be in harmony with the practice of the early church where "baptism by immersion was both custom and the rule."

31. Dearing, p. 14.

32. Ibid., p. 109.

Tertullian wrote: "We dip not once but three times, at the mention of each of the Three Persons of the Trinity."³³

The primitive church recognized that occasionally a person could not be immersed, as in the case of sickness or imprisonment, so that baptism by affusion was acceptable; a person so baptized was a legitimate Christian. The Didache states: "But if thou hast not either, (means for immersion), pour water thrice upon the head in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."³⁴

Baptism was apparently "sealed" with the sign of the cross upon the forehead of the recipient. Cornelius, Bishop of Rome, (251-252), recorded that Novatian had been baptized on a sick-bed by affusion. He did not dispute the validity of the baptism, but he objected to Novatian's failure to comply with the Church regulation as to the reception of confirmation from episcopal hands. This he calls being "signed by the bishop", which alludes to the sign of the cross made by the bishop on the head of each person confirmed.³⁵

Wesley used these ceremonials as models for baptism. Later he became less rigorous about immersion writing:

To sum up all, the matter of baptizing (whether by dipping or sprinkling) is not determined in Scripture. There is no *command* for one rather than the other. There is no *example* from which we can conclude for *dipping* rather than *sprinkling*. There are probable examples of both, and both are equally contained in the *natural meaning* of the work.³⁶

33. Warren, p. 70.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid., pp. 169-170.

36. John Wesley, "Treatise on Baptism", in his Works, X, 191.

Wesley remained adamant on the appropriateness of infant baptism believing that since "infants are guilty of original sin..., they are proper subjects of baptism."³⁷ Again he appealed to the primitive church in defense of this practice, writing:

Lastly, if to baptize infants has been the general practice of the Christian Church in all places and in all ages, then this must have been the practice of the apostles, and consequently, the mind of Christ. But to baptize infants has been the general practice of the Christian Church in all places and in all ages. Of this we have unexceptionable witnesses: St. Austin for the Latin Church (who flourished before the year 400) and Origen for the Greek (born in the second century), both declaring not only that the whole Church of Christ did then baptize infants, but likewise that they received this practice from the apostles themselves...St. Cyprian likewise is express for it, and a whole council with him.³⁸

In fact, Cyprian advised baptism of infants while they were only two or three days old. He believed that it was particularly important to baptize those who had no sin (other than the stain of original sin), because they would receive remission of sins more easily.

Wesley's administration of baptism was in total harmony with the primitive church. Though he used the Book of Common Prayer as the liturgical basis for baptism, he did so because he felt it conveyed, in general, the practice of the early church. When he deviated from the Prayer Book in the non-juring tradition he did so because he believed that such a practice lay even closer to the tradition of the primitive church.

37. Ibid., X, 193.

38. Ibid., X, 197.

C. The Service of the Word

The Service of the Word always has been an integral part of Christian worship. The ancient liturgies consisted of two parts: the Service of the Catechumens called the Synaxis and the Eucharist proper which took place after the catechumens left the service.

The Synaxis was the Service of the Word, much of it borrowed from Jewish liturgy. A typical service, as described in Book II of the Apostolic Constitutions, began with the reading of the lections by lay persons, interspersed by congregational chants. This was followed by the reading of two lessons. Next a psalm was chanted, sung by a soloist. When the solo was ended the Gospel was read by a priest or a deacon. After all the readings had been completed each priest delivered a homily, following which the catechumens were dismissed by a deacon so the Eucharist could be received by the faithful.³⁹

The Methodist preaching service, originated by Wesley, was similar in design to the Synaxis. The preaching service began with a short prayer, followed by a hymn. The minister then preached about half an hour, another hymn was sung and the meeting was concluded with prayer. The similarity between the two services assumes greater significance when one notes that all three elements in the Methodist service were controversial in the eyes of the Church of England. Wesley again appealed to the primitive church in defense of his rubrics.

39. Duchesne, pp.57-58.

Wesley's sermons often were extemporaneous--a practice that he began deliberately in 1735. Benjamin Ingham noted in his journal that, "Mr. Wesley began to preach without notes, expounding a portion of Scripture *extempore*, according to the ancient usage."⁴⁰ The members of the Holy Club who were with Wesley in Georgia followed his example and extemporaneous preaching soon became commonplace in Methodist services. This innovation really was not controversial, though some preachers condemned Wesley's use of it, (cf. Samuel Wesley, Letters, April 1739).

The use of extempore prayer was a different matter. Even Wesley was uncertain, for a time, about the appropriateness of extempore prayer; once after hearing it used before a sermon he remarked, "Are not the words we speak to God to be set in order at least as carefully as those we speak to our fellow worms?"⁴¹ By 1738 he warmed to this usage and began praying extemporaneously himself. He wrote:

Being at Mr. Fox's Society my heart was so full that I could not confine myself to the forms of prayer which were accustomed to use there. Neither do I purpose to be confined to them anymore; but to pray indifferently, with a form, or without, as I find suitable to particular occasions.⁴²

Wesley was careful to qualify his use of extempore prayer averring that it should last no more than five or ten minutes, that it should be used with the formal prayers in the Book of Common Prayer, and that it

40. Baker, p.53.

41. Wesley, Journal, I.

42. Wesley, Letters, VII.

should not be used in place of those prayers.

The primitive church apparently used extemporaneous prayer; the practice is recorded frequently in the Synaxis and the Eucharist.

Tertullian described prayer thus:

Gazing up heavenward, we Christians pray with hands extended because they are innocent; with heads uncovered, because we are are not ashamed; finally, without a guide because we pray from the heart.⁴³

Other studies show that many ancient prayers were of an extemporaneous character; the ancient church made frequent use of these prayers, (cf. Duchesne, Christian Worship, pp.107-110). This issue was a divisive one between Wesley and the Church of England, but extemporaneous prayer became so important to Wesley that he listed it as one of the four reasons for which he was prepared to separate.⁴⁴

The third marked similarity between the Synaxis and Wesley's Service of the Word was the use of congregational singing. It would be misleading to suggest that Wesley's enormous use of hymns was based solely on primitive church practice. Probably he would have used hymns as a popular means of spreading the gospel and teaching doctrine, whether or not the primitive church sang them. But he was delighted to discover that "Methodist singing" reflected the primitive church. He

43. Warren, p.142, citing Tertullian.

44. Wesley, Letters, III.

wrote:

I was much surprised on reading an "Essay on Music" wrote by one who is a thorough master of the subject, to find that the music of the ancients was as simple as that of the Methodists: that their music consisted of melody, or the arrangement of single notes.⁴⁵

Wesley was on very firm ground in this matter. The Scriptures contain many references to hymn-singing, (as distinguished from the chanting of psalms, cf. Matthew 26:30; Acts 16:25; Ephesians 5:19). There are also hymn texts dating back to the third century written by the Church Fathers, (cf. Methodius, Clement, Basil). These hymns deal with doctrinal material, ie.: The Trinity and Virgin Birth. They were used as didactic tools, just as Wesley used his hymns.

The Preaching Service ultimately developed into the main form of worship in Methodism and, paradoxically, it led to a de-emphasis on formal liturgy, much to Wesley's consternation. But while Wesley was living he used the Service of the Word, constant in his desire to emulate the liturgy of the primitive church.

D. Ordination

The question of episcopal ordination and church orders was the issue which finally caused the Methodists to separate from the Church of England. For many years Wesley advocated the Anglican dogma of the

45. The principle context of this statement is Wesley's defense of monophony vs. polyphony. John Wesley, "The Power of Music", in his Works, XIII.

validity of apostolic succession and the necessity of a three-fold order of ministry, (cf. Letter to Westly Hall, Dec. 30, 1745). But, as had happened so many times before, his belief changed with his continued study of patristic material, e.g.: Lord King's "Inquiry" and Bishop Stillingfleet's Irenicum. Wesley was persuaded by King's book that "bishops and presbyters are the same order and consequently have the right to ordain."⁴⁶ This understanding was confirmed by his reading of Stillingfleet. In a letter dated July 3, 1756 Wesley wrote:

I still believe the episcopal form of government to be scriptural and apostolical. I mean, well agreeing with the practice and writings of the apostles. But that it is *prescribed* in Scripture, I do not believe. This opinion which I once zealously espoused, I have been heartily ashamed of, ever since I read Bishop Stillingfleet's "Irenicum". I think he has unanswerably proved that neither Christ nor his apostles *prescribe* any particular form of Church government, and that the plea of *divine right* for diocesan episcopacy was never heard of in the primitive church.⁴⁷

Despite his change in attitude regarding the validity of apostolic succession and the necessity of a three-fold order of ministry, Wesley, because of loyalty to the Church of England, still refused to ordain ministers. When in 1784 he did perform ordinations, he did so because he believed that to be his only recourse to provide ministers for the churches in America, (cf. letter to "Our Brethren in America").

46. Baker, p. 153.

47. Ibid., p. 146, citing Wesley, Arminian Magazine, 1779.

In this missive, Wesley again appealed to primitive practice in defense of his ordinative action.

As Charles Wesley pointed out to John by performing ordinations himself John Wesley inaugurated his own church. He realized that American churches would require their own liturgy and he provided this in The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America. This included, among other things, a ritual for the ordination of deacons, elders and superintendents. The inclusion of this ritual, more than any other item, indicates the inevitability of the formation of a separate church for Methodists, whether or not Wesley intended it. In an explanation of his reasons for performing ordinations he wrote:

As our American brethren are now totally disentangled both from the State and from the English dierarchy, we dare not entangle them again either with the one or the other. They are now at full liberty simply to follow the Scriptures and the Primitive Church. And we judge it best that they should stand fast in that liberty wherewith God has so strangely made them free.⁴⁸

Wesley's ordination ritual could not have been based on ancient ritual; there is no office extant for the ordination or consecration of bishops, priests, or deacons of ante-Nicene date. There are nebulous allusions to the imposition of hands as forming the essential act of ordination.⁴⁹

48. John Wesley, "Our Brethren in America", in his Works, XIII, 252.

49. Warren, p. 139.

Wesley, in this case, was not concerned with the liturgical formulary for ordination; it was an expedient, a formulary which had to be provided for the churches in America. There are liturgical comparisons between the ancient liturgies and the Wesleyan liturgy because Wesley's pragmatic purpose lay in his interpretation of primitive church orders which in his mind necessitated and justified the formulation of a new ritual for ordination.

CONCLUSION

Wesley did not have access to the whole of patristic literature; therefore some of his liturgical revisions were based on a misunderstanding of ancient practice as evidenced in Wesley's advocacy of constant communion. Some of his liturgical ideals based on ancient practice underwent drastic revision during his ministry, e.g., baptism by immersion. His adoption of some liturgical practices was purely a matter of expediency as evidenced by his use of extemporaneous preaching and his act of ordination. Nonetheless, Wesleyan liturgy, in theory and in practice, bears the indelible stamp of primitive liturgy.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ANGLICAN INFLUENCES

Wesley's wish was to draw from fundamental sources, and the second source from which he derived his formulary was the 1661 revision of the Book of Common Prayer, that body of liturgies and ordinances which reflected the Church of England's intent to conform to primal Christian practice.

Though its roots are entwined in the early Roman and Byzantine liturgies, the Book of Common Prayer is a product of the spirit of liturgical reform which swept Europe in the sixteenth century. The results of the reform included the substitution, in whole or in substantial part, of the vernacular language for the traditional Latin.¹ This reform was an opus magnum of Martin Luther and was adopted by those who came to be called Protestants. Beyond that contribution Luther strongly influenced the formation of the Book of Common Prayer; many of his liturgical innovations served as models for the Anglican liturgy, e.g., the Rite of Baptizing, Matins and Vespers based on forms drawn up in 1542 for use in Schleswig-Holstein, and the opening address in the Marriage Ritual.² Brightman notes that:

The debt of the English book to the Lutheran Orders is in matter

1. Frank Brightman, The English Rite, (London: Rivingtons, 1921), I, xxx.

2. Ibid.

of practice, not doctrine. There is no "Lutheranism" in the book; and the differences and avoidances should be noted as carefully as the likenesses and borrowings. And even in the matter of practice, what is borrowed is often a traditional practice of an adaptation of a traditional practice, not mere innovation.³

Reliance upon traditional practice was an important part of the formation and revisions of the Book of Common Prayer. One of the tasks assigned to the council of bishops and divines appointed by Charles II was to "advise upon and review the Book of Common Prayer comparing the same with the most ancient liturgies and to make necessary alterations."⁴ The result was the 1661 revision of the Book of Common Prayer; this was the liturgical material with which Wesley was most familiar as an Anglican priest. From his loyalty to its expressions and tenets two important factors emerged.

First, Wesley always considered himself to be an ordained priest of the Church of England, and he revered his mother Church and her liturgies. He believed the Book of Common Prayer to be only slightly less inspired than the Bible.⁵ In praise of it he declared:

I believe there is no liturgy in the world, either in ancient or modern language, which breathes more of a solid, scriptural, rational piety than the Common Prayer of the Church of England. And though the main of it was compiled considerable more than two hundred years ago, yet is the language of it not only pure, but

3. Ibid., I, lxxx.

4. Ibid., I, cxciv.

5. Frank Baker, John Wesley and the Church of England. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1970), p. 234.

strong and elegant in the highest degree.⁶

Second, Wesley accepted the Book of Common Prayer as the repository for Anglican doctrine and practice and as the guideline for true churchmanship. He defended his own churchmanship by appealing to the Book of Common Prayer and defined the Church of England in terms of Article 19:

That body of people, nominally united, which profess to hold the doctrine contained in the Articles and Homilies, and to use Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and Public Prayer, according to the Common Prayer Book.⁷

It is highly significant that his definition of separation from the church therefore included abandoning the Book of Common Prayer.

Wesley remained loyal to the Anglican Church and her liturgies avowing in his Methodist writings as late as 1783 that, "In my Journals, in the Magazine, in every possible way, I have advised the Methodists to keep to the Church...If ever the Methodists in general were to leave the Church, I must leave them."⁸ Again, in 1788, three years before his death, Wesley re-affirmed: "I am a Church of England man, and I said fifty years ago, so I say still, in the Church I

6. John Wesley, The Sunday Service, (London: np, 1784), preface

7. John Wesley, "Ought We to Separate from the Church of England?", cited by Baker, pp. 306-307.

8. Emory S. Bucke, (ed.), The History of American Methodism, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1964)

will live and die, until I am thrust out."⁹

With characteristic ambivalence Wesley did not consider the Church of England nor the Book of Common Prayer to be inviolable; on occasion when he found it necessary to alter a liturgy he did so in order to make it more compatible with his conception of Scriptural Christianity, (supra Revisions of the Prayer Book, Chapter 1, p.7). He did not hesitate to criticize parts of the Prayer Book as being "contrary to Scripture." Some of his objections were stated in a document which he read to his preachers at the 1755 Conference:

Nay, there are some things in the Common Prayer Book itself which we do not undertake to defend: as in the Athanasian Creed (though we firmly believe the doctrine contained therein) the damnable clauses, and the speaking of *this* faith (that is, these opinions) as if it were the grand term of salvation; that expression, first used concerning Charles the Second, "our most religious king"; the answers in the Office of Baptism which are appointed to be made by the sponsors; the Office of Confirmation; the *absolution* in the Office for visiting the sick; the thanksgiving in the Burial Office; those parts in the Office for Ordaining Bishops, Priests and Deacons, which assert or suppose an essential difference between bishops and presbyters; the use of those words in Ordaining Priests, "whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted". One might add (though these are not properly a part of Common Prayer), Hopkin's and Sternhold's Psalms.¹⁰

Wesley remedied what he considered deficiencies in his Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America with Other Occasional Services.

9. John Wesley, Letters, (London: Epworth Press, 1931), VIII, 58.

10. Wesley, "Ought We to Separate."

He did not consider his alterations grounds for separation from the Church of England because he never abandoned use of the Book of Common Prayer. In his mind his liturgy was not a replacement of the Book of Common Prayer but sensible revisions thereof. Following are several salient comparisons between Wesleyan liturgy and the Book of Common Prayer.

LITURGICAL COMPARISONS

A. The Lord's Supper

The Wesleyan Order for Holy Communion which followed the Sunday Service was almost identical to the rite found in the Book of Common Prayer. The few alterations which appeared were relatively minor. Some were made in the interest of brevity and style; others reflected a growing dichotomy in doctrinal emphases, e.g., the substitution of the word elder for priest. Other changes indicate that the Wesleyan rite was intended for use not in English parish churches, but in the newly assigned preaching houses in America.

Wesley designed Methodist preaching services so that they could not serve as substitutes for Holy Communion in the parish church, and he was careful to schedule such services so that their meetings would not conflict with stated hours of worship. It was his intention that Methodists should rely on the established church for (1) the sacraments themselves and (2) for their doctrinal interpretation.¹¹

11. Albert Outler, John Wesley, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 332.

Wesley's own interpretation of the sacraments bears traces of Moravian (via Zinzendorf, Spanenberg and Bohler--hence Lutheran) and non-juror influences but his interpretation has closest affinity with that of Thomas Cranmer, viz: the belief in a two-fold presence of Christ in the sacrament, a figurative presence in the sacrament, and a real and spiritual presence in the heart of the believer.¹² The presence of Christ in the believer's heart was the "effective means of receiving grace," and was the element that made the partaking of Holy Communion essential, (supra The Lord's Supper, Chapter One, p. 12).

The Book of Common Prayer stressed the importance of *frequent* communion. One of the last admonitions in the Order for Holy Communion states: "And note, that every parishoner shall communicate at the least three times in the year, of which Easter is to be one."¹³ Wesley, in his liturgy, emphasized the words "at the least" and advocated constant communion. He wrote:

But, secondly, we cannot conclude from these words that the Church excuses him who receives only thrice a year. The plain sense of them is that he who does not receive thrice at least shall be cast out of the Church. But they by no means excuse him who communicates no oftener. This never was the judgement of our Church. On the contrary, she takes all possible care that the sacrament be duly administered, wherever the Common Prayer is read, every Sunday and holiday of the year.¹⁴

12. Ole Borgen, John Wesley on the Sacraments, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), p. 68.

13. Brightman, II, 719.

14. John Wesley, "The Duty of Constant Communion", in his Works, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), VII, 156.

The Church issued this directive for those in Holy Orders:

And in Cathedrall, and Collegiate Churches, and Colledges, where there are many Priests and Deacons, they shall receive the Communion with the Priest every Sunday at the least, except they have a reasonable cause to the Contrary.¹⁵

Wesley followed this practice faithfully all his life.

Wesley's views concerning the Lord's Supper were subject to very little change throughout his ministry; in 1787 he published the sermon, "The Duty of Constant Communion" substantially as it had been written fifty-five years earlier, claiming, "I have not yet seen cause to alter my sentiments in any point which is therein delivered."¹⁶

In his early ministry Wesley was rigorous in his enforcement of the rubrics of the Order for the Lord's Supper. This caused him some trouble in Georgia when he barred his then "intended", Sophie Hopkey, from Holy Communion and Wesley was, in turn, sued by the young woman's father for defamation of character. Wesley's rejection of the woman was not out of order; he was in conformity with a directive in the Book of Common Prayer:

So many as intend to be partakers of the Holy Communion shall signify their names to the Curate at least sometime the day before.

15. Brightman, II, 716-717.

16. Wesley, "The Duty of Constant Communion", pp. 147-157.

And if any of these be open and notorious evillivers...the Curate having knowledge thereof, shall call him and advertise him, that in any wise he presume not to come to the Lord's Table, until he have openly declared himself to have truly repented and amended his naughty life.

One wonders, however, whether Wesley's refusal to admit Miss Hopkey to Holy Communion was a matter of signification of date or state.

Likewise the Curate is enjoined to use the same measures "with those betwixt whom he perceiveth Malice and Hatred to reign."¹⁷

In later years Wesley was less rigorous about exercising this rule but he maintained still that the Lord's Supper was for *penitent* sinners only. Some argued that this rule prevented many from receiving frequent communion since they judged themselves unworthy, but Wesley wrote:

It is true, our Church forbids those "who have done any grievous crime" to receive without repentence. But all that follows from this is that we should repent before we come--not that we should neglect to come at all.¹⁸

Wesley judged whether or not a person was penitent and worthy of receiving the Lord's Supper through the class meeting, at which time the spiritual lives of members were examined and they received "encouragement or reproof, as their spiritual lives seemed to require."¹⁹ In addition, Methodists were required to secure tickets which indicated

17. Brightman, II, 639.

18. Wesley, "The Duty of Constant Communion", p. 152.

19. Frederick Norwood, The Story of American Methodism, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1974), p. 33.

that they were members in good standing of the Methodist societies. Each ticket holder was examined quarterly by the class leader to ensure that the communicant was living a Christian life and growing in the faith. It therefore was not crucial that Wesley include the examination of the communicants in the liturgy; it was accomplished already through the structure of the Methodist societies. He remained in accord with the rubric of the Book of Common Prayer in that communicants must be penitent to receive the Lord's Supper.

The following are alterations which Wesley made in the Anglican Order for the Administration of the Lord's Supper:

<u>Book of Common Prayer</u>	<u>Wesley</u>
Instructions to minister/priest	Instructions to elder
Long exhortations and notices	Omitted
Nicene Creed	Omitted
Prayer for the Church "to all Bishops and Curates"	Prayer for the Church "to all ministers of Thy Gospel"
Invitation	Invitation shortened
Confession "burden of them is intolerable"	Phrase omitted
Absolution	Omitted
Prayer of Oblation	Extempore prayer
Blessing	Prayer for blessing ²⁰

20. Trevor Dearing, Wesleyan and Tractarian Worship, (London: Epworth Press, 1966), p.112.

With these exceptions the Wesleyan Order for the Administration of the Lord's Supper was the rite of the Church of England, and Wesley remained adamant in his conviction that this liturgy was in harmony with the primitive church. Oddly enough, the similarity in rites and sacramental principles did not prevent the subject of Holy Communion from becoming a major factor in the separation of the Methodists from the Church of England. Wesley was convinced that the Lord's Supper must be administered only by an ordained clergyman. In his desire to provide frequent communion opportunities for American Methodists Wesley himself ordained clergymen, thus causing the separation from the Church of England.

B. Baptism

In "The Treatise on Baptism" Wesley wrote:

Before I begin to treat of baptism I would just observe that these three things are essential to Christian baptism: 1. An episcopal administrator. 2. The application of water. 3. That it be administered in the name of the Trinity.²¹

These three requirements form the basis of the Wesleyan Order for the Administration of Baptism, and they are in total harmony with the rite in the Book of Common Prayer. In spite of significant alterations

21. John Wesley, "Treatise on Baptism", in his Works, X, 187.

Wesley's rite is very similar to the Anglican rite. He expunged all references to godparents, including the address and charge made to them and their answers on behalf of the child baptized. In some editions of the Sunday Service he omitted the rubric enjoining the Sign of the Cross to be made on the forehead of the person baptized. This omission may have been made on the initiative of Thomas Coke, but Wesley later changed his mind and included the sign in some editions of his liturgy.

Wesley was a pioneer in the use of sprinkling rather than dipping as the desired method of baptism. This seems surprising when one recalls his over-zealousness in the practice of baptism by immersion while he was in Georgia (1735-1738). The Book of Common Prayer rubric which calls for baptism by dipping does not necessarily mean immersion; it may mean that the person was made to touch the water rather than being fully immersed. Immersion was, however, the preferred practice in the Anglican Church.

Wesley wavered in his use of the prayer for regeneration that was included in the Anglican service. He retained some of the prayer in his own liturgy but expunged those phrases which seemed to imply that in baptism the person was automatically reborn. He believed that baptismal regeneration "was possible but not guaranteed."²²

The 1661 Book of Common Prayer contained a rubric asserting the salvation of baptized infants:

22. Baker, p. 247.

It is certain by God's word that children which are baptized dyeing before they commit actual sin are undoubtedly saved.²³

Wesley embraced this rubric enthusiastically; in his "Treatise on Baptism" he listed five reasons in defense of infant baptism. He emphasized that infant baptism was God's will and the practice of the Apostles.

In Wesley's mind baptism was an effective means of grace because it was a sacrament. He believed that the liturgy must contain the outward act of washing with water because it signified:

the washing away the guilt of original sin by the application of the merits of Christ's death...This beginning of that vast, inward change is usually termed, the new birth. Baptism is the outward sign of this inward grace, which is supposed by our Church to be given with and through that sign to all infants, and to those of riper years, if they repent and believe the gospel.²⁴

Wesley turned to the Catechism in the Book of Common Prayer in defense of this belief. His sacramentarian principles were apparently totally Anglican in origin.

Wesley believed that the baptismal liturgy was sufficient for confirmation into the Church as evidenced by this statement:

By baptism we are admitted into the Church, and consequently made members of Christ, its Head. The Jews were admitted into the Church by circumcision, so are the Christians by baptism...It

23. Brightman, II, 747.

24. Borgen, p. 54.

admits us into the Church here, so into the glory hereafter...In the ordinary way, there is no means of entering into the Church or into heaven.²⁵

The Church in the passage above is not the Church of England but the universal church. Admission into the universal church was all that was necessary. Because of this emphasis on admission by baptism Wesley believed it was unnecessary to provide an Order for Confirmation or a formal ritual for reception of members; the Sunday Service did not contain that Order.

C. The Service of the Word (Synaxis)

The basic design of the Service of the Word included prayers, hymns, lessons and instructions (the sermon). In the ancient church this was the Service of the Catechumens. In the Anglican and Methodist services the Service of the Word included opening prayers, the Epistle, the Gospel, the Creed and the sermon. Everything before the Offertory resembled the Service of the Catechumens.

During the fourth century, as the monastic movement grew, the Service of the Word developed into the observance of Canonical Hours--Matins, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers and Compline. The core of these services was Psalm and Scripture readings. Though they did not include a sermon, these orders were complete acts of worship.

25. Wesley, "Treatise on Baptism," p. 191.

During the English reformation Thomas Cranmer simplified the Services, reduced the Canonical Hours to two--Matins and Vespers--and made them available to the entire congregation. Though this practice was not widespread in Wesley's time, these services were intended for daily use.

Wesley's veneration of the liturgy of the Church of England included the Service of the Word. He attended the Offices on every possible occasion and urged the Holy Club and, later, the Methodists to follow his example exhorting them to "frequent the church... especially public and private prayer."²⁶ For a time, daily attendance at Church Ordinances was a requirement of Methodists, (cf. Rules for Bonds, 1744, Rule #2).

During the Georgia mission Wesley wrote of his attempt to impose daily offices on the churches:

I began dividing the public prayers according to the original appointment of the Church: (still observed in a few places in England.) The morning service began at five. The communion office, (with the sermon), at eleven. The evening service about three.²⁷

It was never Wesley's intention that the Methodist Preaching service and extempore prayer should supersede Morning and Evening Prayer. He maintained that the former should serve as valuable

26. John Wesley, Journal, (London: Epworth Press, 1938), I, 97.

27. Ibid., I, 29.

supplements to the printed form in the Book of Common Prayer. He required his preachers always to read from the Order for Morning Prayer claiming: "I myself find more life in the church prayers than in the formal extemporary prayers of Dissenters."²⁸

Wesley designed his preaching services so that they would not conflict with regular church hours. Though he recognized that conflicts of schedule were unavoidable, he was explicit about the content of the service when such a conflict occurred. He wrote:

In what cases do we allow of service in church hours? I answer...

4. When there is no church at all within two or three miles. And we advise everyone who preaches in the church hours to read Psalms and Lessons with part of the Church Prayers; because we apprehend this will endear the Church service to our brethren, who probably would be prejudiced against it, if they heard none but extemporary prayers.²⁹

Wesley stressed the importance of attending Church services though he was opposed in this by many of his followers who much preferred the simpler preaching services. In the 1786 and 1788 editions of the service books for English Methodists, Wesley included Matins as the Service of the Word. In his Sunday Service for American Methodists he included abridged editions of the Order for Morning and Evening Prayer taken from the Book of Common Prayer. From the Order

28. Wesley, Letters, VI, 326.

29. John Wesley, "Of Separation from the Church," in his Works, XIII, 257.

for Morning Prayer Wesley removed some of the opening sentences, the Venite, Benedicte, Benedictus, the second Lord's Prayer and the versicles following the prayer, two closing prayers and the Quincunque Vult. He shortened the prayer of Absolution and revised it to become a pastoral prayer rather than a priestly declaration. The Evening Prayer was revised similarly with the omission of the Magnificat and the Nunc Dimittis. In addition, Wesley no longer required that the Orders be used daily, but on every Lord's day. This was, in part, a sign that he realized that public worship was impossible in a pioneering situation.³⁰

Despite Wesley's intent, the Preaching Service developed as the main form of worship in Methodism and the regular use of the Offices was lost. Wesley would have considered this a two-fold loss: (1) the liturgy which he considered to be the most Scriptural and poetic in the world was lost; (2) primitive practice disappeared, since he believed the Offices to be a central element in Christian worship in the ancient church.

D. The Ordinal

The Church of England taught that there were three orders of ministry dating back to apostolic times and providing for the permanent life of the Church. The apostles appointed deacons to minister to the

30. Baker, p. 245.

Christians in Jerusalem. As the Gospel spread to other cities presbyters were appointed to minister to those in other cities. These presbyters were overseers of the Church. When Paul knew that his ministry was at an end he appointed Timothy and Titus to act as delegates in Ephesus and Crete, with the power to ordain presbyters and deacons. From this chain the doctrine of the three orders of ministers and the doctrine of Apostolic Succession was derived.³¹

The liturgy of the 1661 Book of Common Prayer included offices for the ordination of three orders of ministers, with the stipulation that the candidate for ordination be episcopally ordained; this issue led to the separation of the Methodists from the Church of England. As late as 1746 Wesley had advocated the traditional Anglican view of Apostolic succession and the validity of a three-fold order of ministry. This opinion changed with his reading of Bishop Stillingfleet's works. As a result of his study Wesley opined that bishops and presbyters were of one order and that presbyterial ordination was acceptable. He also believed that apostolic succession did not mean an unbroken line of episcopal ordination but ordination performed in the spirit of the apostles. This meant that Wesley regarded every presbyter as a potential bishop whose own ordination gave him the right to ordain other presbyters, at least in special circumstances.³²

31. Leighton Puller, History of the Book of Common Prayer, (London: Longmans, Green, 1900), p. 254.

32. Baker, p. 254.

For almost half a century Wesley refused to ordain ministers himself because he recognized that this act would be "little less than a formal separation from the Church."³³ It was when he was forced to choose between leaving his followers without the sacraments (since there were not enough ordained ministers to administer them), or to ordain ministers himself that Wesley opted to perform his first ordinations. He defended his actions in "Of Separation from the Church", claiming that his hand was forced by the Church of England's own inertia in the matter. He wrote:

...(American Methodists) had applied to the Church of England over and over (for ordained ministers); but it was to no purpose. Judging this to be a cause of real necessity, I took a step which, for peace and quietness, I had refrained from taking for many years. I exercised that power which I am fully persuaded the great Shepherd and Bishop of our church has given me, I appointed three of our laborers to go and help them, by not only preaching the word of God, but likewise by administering the Lord's Supper and baptizing their children...

These are steps which, not of choice, but necessity, I have slowly and deliberately taken.³⁴

In the certificate of ordination presented to Thomas Coke on the morning of his ordination (1784) Wesley stressed again that he was performing ordinations so that the Methodists could continue to adhere to the Doctrines and Disciplines of the Church of England, namely, receiving the sacraments from a duly ordained minister. He wanted

33. Ibid.

34. Wesley, "Of Separation from the Church", p. 256.

to avoid separation if it was possible; succeeding events proved that ordination meant separation, and in 1786 Methodist societies in America became Methodist churches.

The dispute was not liturgical, but doctrinal. Wesley made his design of the Ordinal for the Methodist Church as close to the Anglican Ordinal as practicable. The Book of Common Prayer Ordinal was entitled, "The Form and Manner of making, ordaining and consecrating Bishops, Priests and deacons, according to the Order of the Church of England." In his revision, Wesley omitted the last clause and entitled the Ordinal, "The Form and Manner of Making and Ordaining Superintendents, Elders and Deacons." Throughout the liturgy Wesley substituted the words "Superintendent" and "elder" for "bishop" and "priest", and ordination remained identical to those in the Book of Common Prayer: the deacons were required to read and expound the Scriptures; priests/elders were charged to visit the sick, preach the Word of God and to administer the sacraments to the congregation.

In the Anglican and Methodist Order for the ordination of priests/elders communion was served following the laying on of hands. In the Anglican form communion was preceeded by the Nicene Creed; Wesley had previously omitted the Creed from his communion service.

The Form of Ordaining a Superintendent was almost identical in its structure to that of the Anglican Order for the ordination of bishops. Several words were changed; "bishop" or "archbishop" was replaced by "superintendent", "diocese" was replaced by "district".

In the Wesleyan Order the candidate was presented to the superintendent by two elders rather than by two bishops as the Anglican form required.

The charge to the bishop/superintendent and the closing rubrics are almost identical in both forms:

Book of Common Prayer

Then the Archbishop shall proceed in the Communion Service: with whom the new consecrated Bishop (with others) shall also Communicate.

Wesley

Then the Superintendent shall proceed in the Communion Service: with whom the newly ordained Superintendent and other Persons present, shall communicate.

It is clear that Wesley was trying to provide the newly formed Methodist Church with an episcopal system fashioned after the Church of England and using its liturgy.

Wesley's high regard for the Book of Common Prayer never faltered. He believed to the end that it was the most beautiful, most Scriptural liturgy in the world--and the one most reflective of ancient church practice. His revisions and alterations of the Book of Common Prayer forming the Sunday Service, were made not because Wesley held the Anglican liturgy in less esteem, but because the liturgy was no longer appropriate for the politically independent American churches. Wesley's revisions often include the substitution of one or two words in the liturgy, e.g.; in the Ordinal. These revisions were more than semantics; they reflected an evolution in doctrinal beliefs that were not compatible with Anglican teachings, especially in the area of ministers'

orders. More important, the revisions reflected Wesley's efforts to remain loyal to the Book of Common Prayer without compromising his integrity or that of his followers by ignoring growing doctrinal and political differences.

CHAPTER THREE

THE WESLEYAN INNOVATIONS

John Wesley's determination to produce a liturgical formulary for the people called Methodists resulted in a liturgy entitled, The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America (1784); it was a revision of the Book of Common Prayer, and its contents included:

The Order for Morning Prayer, Every Lord's Day
 The Order for Evening Prayer, Every Lord's Day
 The Litany
 A Prayer and Thanksgiving to be used every Lord's Day
 Collects, Epistles and Gospels to be used through the year
 The Order for Administration of the Lord's Supper
 The Ministration of Baptism of Infants
 The Ministration of Baptism to such as are of Riper Years
 The Form of Solemnization of Matrimony
 The Communion of the Sick
 The Order for the Burial of the Dead
 Select Psalms
 The Form and Manner of Making and Ordaining Superintendents,
 Elders and Deacons
 Articles of Religion

Of this liturgy Wesley wrote:

I have prepared a liturgy...which I advise all the traveling preachers to use on the Lord's day, in all their congregations... I also advise the elders to administer the supper of the Lord on every Lord's day. If anyone will point out a more rational and scriptural way of feeding and guiding the poor sheep in the wilderness, I will gladly embrace it. At present, I cannot see any better method than that I have taken.¹

1. John Wesley, The Wesley Orders of Common Prayer, (Nashville: National Methodist Student Movement, 1957), p. 8.

At the Christmas Conference at Baltimore in 1784 the Methodist Church voted unanimously to accept the Sunday Service as the liturgy for use in all Methodist congregations. Despite this initial declaration of the Conference the service was followed for a few years and then fell into disuse. Jesse Lee, Methodist preacher and circuit-rider, explained why:

For some time the preacher generally read prayers on the Lord's day, and in some cases the preachers read part of the morning service on Wednesdays and Fridays; but some who had long been accustomed to pray extempore were unwilling to adopt this new plan, being fully satisfied that they could pray better and with more devotion while their eyes were shut than they could with their eyes open. After a few years the Prayer book was laid aside and has never been used since in Public worship.²

No formal liturgy replaced the Sunday Service and the nineteenth century Methodist churches were left without a stated form of worship. Methodist services were characterized generally by an informal, free-form style of worship; the preaching service became the accepted mode of worship and liturgy.

Wesley's Sunday Service was lost to the Methodist Church but his contribution to liturgy was not. His liturgy was a revision of another, the Book of Common Prayer, but his use of (1) extempore preaching and prayer and (2) congregational singing were distinctly his own; they remain significant contributions to the liturgies of a number of evangelical denominations.

2. Holland McTyeire, Centennial History of the Methodist Episcopal Church, (Nashville: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1884) p. 371, citing Jesse Lee, Journals.

A. Hymns

The Metrical Hymns which were sung in the Eastern Churches as early as ca. 200 A.D. were brought into the West by Ambrose, bishop of Milan, who composed Trinitarian hymns for his congregation to sing to preserve them from Arian Heresy. A number of hymns flourished during that period, (supra Chapter 1, p. 21.)

Thomas Cranmer attempted to translate some of the early hymns into English and to include them in the Litany. In a letter to Henry VIII he wrote:

In mine opinion, the song that shall be made thereunto would not be full of notes, but as near as may be for every syllable a note; so that it may be sung distinctly and devoutly.³

Wesley was specific in his determination that the hymns of the Methodists were to be sung in syllabic style, that is, one note per syllable. In the Preface to the hymn collection published in 1780 Wesley, the editor, defended the expressions of his brother Charles, the hymnist, declaring that:

We talk common sense in both prose and verse, and use no word but in a fixed and determinate sense.⁴

3. Francis Proctor, A History of the Book of Common Prayer. (London: Macmillan, 1875), p. 174

4. John Wesley, A Collection of Hymns for the People called Methodists, (London: np, 1780), p. vi.

He complained that the rococo poetry of his day was littered with what he called "weak epithets."

Wesley averred that the "spirit of piety" is more important than the "spirit of poetry." To these literary ideals Wesley added a musical adjunct, namely, that the music of the Methodists was as simple as that of the ancients. He frequently attacked more complicated, polyphonic music. A service at Warrington on Sunday, April 8, 1781, elicited these scathing remarks:

The service was at the usual hour. I came in just in time to put a stop to a bad custom which was creeping in. A few men, who had fine voices, sang a Psalm which no one knew, in a tune fit for an opera; wherein 3, 4 or 5 persons sang different words at the same time. What an insult upon common sense! What a burlesque upon public worship! No custom can excuse such a mixture of profaneness and absurdity.⁵

Seven hymns were included in the royal Primer (1545), one for each Service; but, with the exception of "Come Holy Ghost" these hymns were deleted from the Book of Common Prayer. According to Brightman this omission was caused probably not by hostility to hymns but by the difficulty of obtaining them in English.⁶ Cranmer felt that he did not possess the ability to compose hymns. He wrote:

5. John Wesley, Journal, (London: Epworth Press, 1938), V, 281.

6. Frank Brightman, The English Rite, (London: Rivingtons, 1921), I, lxxxiii.

I have travailed to make the verses in English and have put the Latin note unto the same...But by cause mine English verses lack the grace and facility I would wish they had, your majesty might cause some other to make them again, that can do the same in more pleasant English and phrase.⁷

No one was able to put the verses into "more pleasant English" and hymn singing was lost to the Anglican liturgy. In Germany Martin Luther had versified many Latin hymns into vernacular German, with some of the Psalms, the Lord's Prayer, and many parts of his Liturgy and Catechism.

The Calvinist reformers of the sixteenth century eschewed hymns and substituted metrical versions of the Psalms which were:

set forth and allowed to be sung in all churches of all the people together, before and after Morning and Evening Prayer, and also before and after the Sermons; and moreover in private houses, for their godly solace and comfort.⁸

This permission was granted in the Injunctions of Elizabeth, issued to relieve from penalty those who sang metrical psalms, hymns or anthems as adjuncts to the prescribed service. These Psalms were not included in the Book of Common Prayer and were not an authorized part of the liturgy.⁹

7. Ibid., I, lx.

8. Proctor, p. 176.

9. Ibid.

The use of hymns in the liturgy was not part of Wesley's Anglican heritage, yet they developed into one of the most integral parts of his liturgy and, subsequently, for the American Methodist churches. Rattenbury wrote that:

The Wesleys were trying to revive the central Christian tradition, which saw the liturgy as an act of Christian worship, adoration, praise and thanksgiving requiring singing for its fullest and most satisfactory celebration.¹⁰

Wesley first introduced hymns into the liturgy while he was in Georgia. It has been noted that he spent two hours revising the Book of Common Prayer in preparation for his ministry in Savannah. His memo notes also that he spent three hours revising the New Version of Metrical Psalms by Tate and Brady which was attached to the Book of Common Prayer. Wesley introduced these revisions and some of his own hymns into public worship in America, and this experiment in hymn singing became a regular feature in British Methodism.¹¹

Two of the charges brought against Wesley during his tenure in Georgia involved the use of the hymns in the liturgy. The first read: "Changing or altering such passages as he thinks proper in the version of the Psalms publicly authorized to be sung in the Church"; the

10. J.E. Rattenbury, The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley, (London: Epworth Press, 1948), p. 151.

11. Frank Baker, John Wesley and the Church of England, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1970), p. 51.

second read: "Introducing into the Church and service at the altar compositions of psalms and hymns not inspected or authorized by any proper judicature."¹²

A recurring attack on Methodism was the epithet of "enthusiasm". One of the most formidable personal attacks on Wesley appeared in Bishop Warburton's "The Doctrine of Grace: or the Office and Operations of the Holy Spirit vindicated from the insults of infidelity and the abuses of fanaticism". In this tract Wesley was accused of "laying claim to almost every apostolic gift in as full and ample a manner as they were possessed of old".¹³ Hymn-singing in the church was attacked as being an out-pouring of "enthusiasm". Yet the hymnbooks which the Wesley brothers published were arranged with care and deliberation. In the Preface to A Collection of Hymns for use of the People Called Methodists, (1780), Wesley wrote:

It is large enough to contain all the important truths of our most holy religion, whether speculative or practical; yea, to illustrate them all, and to prove them both by Scripture and reason: and this is done in a regular order. The hymns are not carelessly jumbled together, but carefully arranged under proper heads, according to the experience of real Christians. So that the book is, in effect, a little body of experimental and practical divinity.¹⁴

12. Ibid., p. 47.

13. Ibid., citing Green, Anti-Methodist Publications.

14. Wesley, Collection of Hymns, p. vi.

Wesley insisted on three criteria for the proper use of hymns:

(1) The hymns must enrich the liturgy and not detract from it. They should be used in reverence and seemliness. (2) The hymns must be accurate. They must teach right belief according to Scripture and reason. (3) The language of the hymns should be precise and poetic. The hymns should reflect the best of the English language.

1. The use of hymns to enrich the liturgy - The Methodists were accused by conservatives of disrupting the liturgy with the inclusion of hymn-singing but this was not Wesley's intent. He described Methodist worship as:

The solemn praises of God...not interrupted by the formal drawl of the parish clerk, the screaming of boys who bawl out what they neither understand or feel...When it is seasonable to sing praises to God they do it with the spirit and the understanding also... in psalms and hymns which are both sense and poetry.¹⁵

It was so important to Wesley that the hymns be used in reverence and seemliness that he wrote seven rules for singing them. These instructions sought to ensure that the people would not be carried away by enthusiasm nor become careless in their singing.

2. The use of hymns as didactic tools - Charles Wesley must be given credit for the composition of mostly all of the Wesleyan hymns;

15. John Wesley, Letters, (London: Epworth Press, 1931), III, 227.

but very little was published in the name of Methodism that did not bear John's imprimatur as editor. John's theology is contained in Charles' hymns.

The stated purpose of the hymns was:

a means of raising or quickening the spirit of devotion; of confirming the believer's faith; of enlivening his hope; and of kindling and increasing his love to God and man.¹⁶

The 1972 Book of Discipline noted that during the period when Methodist concern about doctrinal standards was low, "it was the Wesleyan hymnody that served as the most important single means of communicating the doctrinal substance of the gospel and its guardianship as well".¹⁷

Baker writes that the main emphasis of Wesleyan theology was:

a personal experience of God's saving and sustaining love was possible not only for an elect few, but for all men...Salvation must be "free", but it must also be "for all" otherwise it was hardly a gospel. This gospel illustrated from Scripture, from theological reasonings and from personal experience, formed the one theme of Charles Wesley's hymns.¹⁸

Wesley's hymns were saturated with Scriptural references and

16. Wesley, Collection of Hymns, p. vi.

17. Book of Discipline, (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1972), p. 44.

18. Frank Baker, Representative Verse of Charles Wesley, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), p. xv.

allusions. Rattenbury wrote: "A skillful man, if the Bible were lost, might extract much of it from Wesley's hymns. They contain the Bible in solution."¹⁹

In the early days of Methodism many of its adherents were only semi-literate. They were unable to read the works of the Church Fathers, the Bible, the Book of Common Prayer and the other works which Wesley found so inspirational. Through the hymns the uneducated Methodists were able to participate in the liturgy and learn those truths which they might not have been able to understand otherwise. The hymns were often lined out until the congregation memorized them; once learned, they became an essential weave in the fabric of Methodist corporate and private devotion.

3. The language of the hymns - The language of the Wesleys' hymns were corollary in importance to the doctrines they contained. Bernard Lord Manning wrote of them with enthusiasm:

The 1780 Collection of Hymns for the use of the People Called Methodists ranks in Christian literature with the Psalms, the Book of Common Prayer, the Canon of the Mass. In its own way it is perfect, unapproachable, elemental in its perfection. You cannot alter it except to mar it; it is a work of supreme devotional art by a religious genius.²⁰

In the preface to the same hymnbook Wesley praised the poetry

19. Ibid., citing Rattenbury, Evangelical Hymns.

20. Ibid., citing Bernard Lord Manning.

of the hymns as highly as the doctrine they contain. He wrote:

1. In these hymns there is no doggerel; no botches; nothing put in to patch up the rhyme; no feeble expletives. 2. Here is nothing turgid or bombast, on the one hand or low and creeping on the other. 3. Here are no cant expressions; no words without meaning. Those who impute this to us know not what they say. We talk common sense both in prose and in verse, and use no word but in a fixed and determinate sense. 4. Here are, allow me to say, both purity, the strength and elegance of the English language; and at the same time, the utmost simplicity and plainness, suited to every capacity. Lastly, I declare men of taste to judge, (these are the only competent judges), whether there be not in some of the following hymns the true Spirit of piety, such as cannot be acquired by art and labor, but must be the gift of nature.²¹

Many of the hymns reflect the elevated language of the Book of Common Prayer, that liturgy which Wesley judged to be the most poetic in the world.

B. Hymns in the Eucharist

One of the topics treated most frequently in Charles Wesley's hymns was the Lord's Supper. An early hymn collection published by the Wesleys was Hymns on the Lord's Supper (1745), intended for singing at the Eucharist. These hymns were prayers in verse form; many expressed the job of the Eucharist; some captured the sense of the communion of saints and all taught the doctrines of the Lord's Supper.²²

21. Wesley, Collection of Hymns, p. vi.

22. Rattenbury, p. 99.

John Wesley originated the Sung Eucharist in which ancient hymns contained in the Liturgy were set to contemporary music and sung by the entire congregation. As had been true of the Lutheran liturgies in Germany, original hymns composed by the Wesleys were interspersed through the service. They were often sung as a devotional background as people moved to and from the communion rail.²³

Critics of the Wesleys charged that the use of hymns in the Eucharist was particularly irreverent and unseemly; but Wesley insisted that such hymns were used with reverence and orderliness in all his services. He wrote:

With regard to the last and most awful part of the Divine Service, the celebration of the Lord's Supper, although we cannot say that either the unworthiness of the minister or the unholiness of some of the communicants deprives the rest of the blessing from God, yet they greatly lessen the comfort of those receiving. But these discouragements are removed from you, you have proof that he who administer fear God; and you have no reason to believe that any of your fellow communicants walk unworthy of their profession. Add to this that the whole service is performed in a decent, solemn manner; is enlivened by hymns suitable to the occasion, and concluded with prayer that comes out of unfeigned lips.²⁴

Wesley believed that in this approach to the Lord's Supper he could (1) remain loyal to the Church of England and the order and rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer and (2) recapture the liturgy of the ancient

23. Baker, John Wesley and the Church of England, p. 86.

24. Wesley, Letters, III, 228.

church. In addition, he was able to add a greater spontaneity than was present in the contemporary Anglican service.

Wesley's use of hymns in the liturgy influenced the Church of England and other denominations. As the evangelical revival took hold in Europe and America hymn-singing became a prominent feature in corporate worship.

C. Extempore Preaching

Wesley's extempore preaching paralleled closely the use of field preaching in an itinerant ministry. It was expedient to be able to preach without the use of notes when one was required to preach frequently and outside the church. Wesley first preached extemporaneously on board ship en route to Georgia. He doubtless adopted this method as a solution to the demands of the pioneer mission environment. He continued preaching extemporaneously after his return to England and was hence accused of being "schismatic". His brother Samuel complained that "the extemporary expounding of Scripture is a natural inlet to all false doctrine, heresy and schism."²⁵ John remained unconvinced of his brother's warning and continued his extempore preaching, urging his followers to do likewise.

As Wesley and his fellow Methodist preachers were turned away from pulpits in parish churches field preaching became the only means of addressing those whom they sought to save. Wesley disapproved at

25. Charles Wesley, Journal, (London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, nd), I, 114.

at first of this practice; in fact, he never accepted it fully. On April 2, 1739, he noted in his Journal:

I submitted to be more vile, and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation speaking from a little eminence in a ground adjoining to the city, to about three thousand people.²⁶

A generation later he wrote:

To this day field-preaching is a cross to me. But I know my commission, and see no other way of preaching the gospel to every creature.²⁷

The very nature of field preaching made extempore preaching necessary. The field preachers never knew to whom they would be preaching at a given time. They had to be flexible in their preaching methods, adapting their sermons to their audience's needs.

Wesley believed that the Holy Spirit was active in this form of preaching. On one occasion, after being turned away from a pulpit, he wrote the following:

Before I went forth into the streets and the highways I sent, after my custom, to borrow the church. The minister (one of the better disposed) sent back a civil message that he would be glad to drink a glass of wine with me, but durst not lend me his pulpit for fifty guineas.

26. John Wesley, Journal, II, 172.

27. Ibid., V, 484.

Mr. Whitefield durst lend me his field, which did just as well. For near an hour and a half God gave me voice and strength to exhort about two thousand sinners to repent and believe the gospel.²⁸

Wesley's Journals contain frequent references that it was God or the Holy Spirit who inspired him in his preaching.

Extempore preaching did not mean that the preaching of the Methodists was unplanned or unstructured. Wesley insisted on as much order and form in sermons as was required in the rest of the service. In his preface to Sermons on Several Occasions he wrote:

I labor to avoid all words which are not easy to be understood, all which are not used in common life and, in particular, those kinds of technical terms that appear so frequently in bodies of divinity--those modes of speaking which men of reading are intimately acquainted with but which to common people are an unknown tongue.²⁹

Wesley insisted on an organized structure for sermons whether they were extemporaneous or written. He believed that Methodist sermons should seek to: (1) invite, (2) convince, (3) to offer Christ, and (4) to build up. In some measure this was to be done in every sermon.³⁰ He urged his preachers to be modest, reverent, sincere, fervent and challenging in their preaching and exhorted:

28. Charles Wesley, Journal, I, 151.

29. John Wesley, Sermons on Several Occasions, (London: Epworth Press, 1938), preface.

30. Trevor Dearing, Wesleyan and Tractarian Worship, (London: Epworth Press, 1966), p. 30.

Observe it is not your business to preach so many times...but to save as many souls as you can; to bring as many sinners as you possibly can to repentance, and with all your power to build them up in that holiness without which they cannot see the Lord.³¹

Because of such admonitive stress the sermon became the focal point of the Methodist Preaching Service, and, thus, the cornerstone of Methodist worship. To ensure that the sermons would meet the needs of the people and bring them to salvation, Wesley issued the following rule:

1. Be sure to begin and end precisely at the time appointed. (This was difficult when the sermon was extemporaneous).
2. Sing no hymns of your own composing.
3. Endeavor to be weighty, serious and solemn in your whole deportment before your congregation.
4. Choose the plainest text you can.
5. Take care not to ramble from your text, but keep close to it, and make out what you undertake.
6. Always suit the subject to the audience.
7. Beware of allegorizing or spiritualizing too much.
8. Tell each other if you observe anything of this kind.³²

Wesley insisted that these rules be followed so that the whole congregation might benefit.

31. John Wesley, Works, (Grand Rapids:Zondervan, 1958), VIII, 298.

32. Albert Outler, John Wesley, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 175, citing Minutes of the Fourth Annual Conference.

D. Extempore Prayer

Wesley's acceptance and use of extempore prayer seemingly was more difficult for him than the embracement of extempore preaching. This was due, in part, to his reverence for the prayers in the Book of Common Prayer; he feared that extempore prayer implied rejection of the Anglican formulary. In 1740 Wesley wrote: "A gentleman came to me full of goodwill, to exhort me not to leave the church, or (which was the same thing in his account) to use extemporary prayer."³³ In another instance a cleric charged that Wesley had disobeyed the Church by using extempore prayer in public, reminding the Methodist leader that:

the church has strongly declared her mind on the point by appointing her excellent Liturgy, which you have solemnly promised to use and no other.³⁴

Wesley replied that he could find nothing in the Book of Common Prayer that forbade extempore prayer, (cf. Letter to John Smith, 1746). Nevertheless, Wesley apparently refrained from extempore public prayer for several years, and his uncertainty concerning the propriety of such prayer is apparent in his diary. In Georgia, after hearing extempore prayer before a sermon, he recorded: "Are not the words we speak to God to be set in order at least as carefully as those we

33. John Wesley, Journal, II, 404.

34. Wesley, Works, VIII, 437.

speak to our fellow worms?", (supra Chapter One, p. 20). Yet, on the same day he recorded: "7 3/4 Mrs. Mackintosh's supper and singing: I prayed extempore!"³⁵

Wesley overcame his aversion to extempore prayer at "Mr. Fox's Society" on 1 April 1738, (supra Chapter One, p. 20), writing that he now adopted this practice because he

believed this to be my bounded duty, for the sake of those who desire me to watch over their souls. I could not in conscience refrain from it, neither from accepting those who desired to serve me as "*sons in the gospel*".³⁶

Even in his most enthusiastic moments Wesley used extempore prayer as a supplement to the recorded prayers in the Book of Common Prayer.

Wesley gave advice on the most effective ways of praying extemporaneously, writing that: (1) the prayer should never exceed eight to ten minutes; and (2) there should never be a long prayer immediately preceeding or following the sermon.³⁷

Despite Wesley's intent extempore prayer became a regular feature of the Methodist preaching services, often superseding the formal prayers. It was the American churches' preference for extempore prayer that caused the rejection of the Sunday Service.

In discussing Wesley's contributions to liturgical formulary three specifically Methodist services deserve mention: (1) the Love

35. Wesley, "Letter to Mary Bishop," in his Letters, VII, 326.

36. Wesley, "Farther Thoughts on Separation," in his Works, XIII, 272-4.

37. John Wesley, Journal, IV, 115.

feast, inspired by the Moravians; (2) the Watchnight, adopted from the Early Church; and (3) the Covenant service, which originated in English Puritanism.

E. The Love-feast

Wesley was introduced to the Love-feast by the band of Moravians in Georgia. Though he did not conduct one himself until he returned to England, he participated in these services, describing the Moravian rite as follows:

After evening prayers we joined with the Germans in one of their Love-feasts. It was begun and ended with thanksgiving and prayer, and celebrated in so decent and solemn a manner as a Christian of the apostolic age would have allowed to be worthy of Christ.³⁸

The Methodist Love-feast was patterned after the Moravian rite. In the following passage Wesley explained why he instituted the service:

In order to increase in them a grateful sense of all God's mercies, I desired that one evening in the quarter all the men in the Band, on a second, all the women, would meet; and on a third, both men and women together "eat bread" as the ancient Christians did, "with gladness and singleness of heart". At these Love-feasts (so we termed them, retaining the name, as well as the thing, which was in use from the beginning) our food is only a little plain cake and water. But we seldom return from them without being fed, not only with the meat that perisheth, but with "that which

38. Ibid., I, 377.

endureth to everlasting life."³⁹

Wesley intended the Love-feast to be free and spontaneous and the service was therefore unstructured, but it followed a general pattern. The service began with hymns and extempore prayer, followed by the sharing of the meal and testimonials. Wesley, with characteristic punctuality, advised that the service was to be concluded within ninety minutes.

The Love-feast enjoyed immense popularity on the American frontier, and for a time threatened to replace the celebration of the Lord's Supper because (1) the services were informal and more characteristic of frontier style and (2) the presence of an ordained minister was not required. By about 1900 the Love-feast had disappeared from general use, though it is still celebrated in churches in the southeast where that ethos remains alive.

F. The Watchnight service

Wesley's institution of the Watchnight service seems to have been a matter of expedience. He had learned of some miners at Kingswood who, before their conversion, spent Saturday evening drinking ale. Once persons were converted, this recreational pastime was considered inappropriate, so the miners looked for another way to spend their leisure time. One miner, James Rogers, suggested they use the

39. Wesley, "Letter to Vincent Perronet," in his Works, IX, 81.

time for Christian worship and this suggestion was received enthusiastically. Wesley learned of these services and turned them into Watchnight services. The first official meeting was held 9 April 1742. The services normally lasted three hours, including "singing and praying and praising God".⁴⁰ The 1744 Conference decreed that the services should be held monthly.

Wesley was criticized for his institution of the Watchnight services, but in a letter to the Rev. Mr. Baily his defense was an appeal to the record of the primitive church:

You charge me fourthly, with holding "midnight assemblies". Sir, did you never see the word "Vigil" in your Common Prayer Book? Do you know what it means? If not, permit me to tell you that it was customary with the ancient Christians to spend whole nights in prayer; and that these nights were termed *Vigiliae* or Vigils. Therefore, for spending a part of some nights in this manner, in public, and solemn prayer, we have not only the authority of our own national Church, but of the universal Church, in the earliest Ages.⁴¹

Watchnight services were held less frequently in the latter part of Wesley's life; they have retained a place in Methodism today, though the Watchnight service is held traditionally on New Year's Eve only.

G. The Covenant Service

The Covenant service was instituted on 6 August 1755. Of this

40. Ibid.

41. Wesley, "Letter to Baily Cork," in his Works, IX, 81.

service Wesley wrote:

I mentioned to the congregation another means of increasing serious religion, which had been frequently practised by our fore-fathers, and attended with eminent blessing; namely the joining in a covenant to serve God with all our heart and with all our soul. I explained this for several mornings following; and on Friday many of us kept a fast unto the Lord, beseeching him to give us wisdom and strength to promise unto the Lord our God and keep it.⁴²

The purpose of the service was to provide a time to hear the promises of God, to thank him for his faithfulness in guarding and guiding his people, and to renew the people's promise of dedication and service to God. Wesley listed these requirements for worthy participation:

- (1) A sense of sin;
- (2) A despair of self.

There was a three-fold warrant:

- (a) God's ordination;
- (b) God's Command;
- (c) God's Promise.

This led to an exhortation to adventure with Christ by:

- (d) Resigning and delivering oneself up to God; being contented that God appoint our
 - (1) Work;
 - (2) Station.⁴³

42. John Wesley, Journal, IV, 126.

43. Dearing, p. 52.

The Covenant service was formulated to provide an adequate liturgy for Christian re-dedication. It was held traditionally on New Year's Day, though it was used on other occasions whenever it was requested.

Liturgical structure was a prime concern in the thought of John Wesley. He believed a richer blessing could be received through "order" rather than "disorder"; he did not, however, believe that his mode of worship was the only acceptable method. His sentiments are stated in a sermon entitled, "Catholic Spirit":

I dare not, therefore, presume to impose my mode of worship on any other. I believe it is truly primitive and apostolical. But my belief is no rule for another. I ask not, therefore, of him with whom I would united in love, "Are you of my church, of my congregation? Do you receive the same form of church government and allow the same church officers with me? Do you join in the same form of prayer wherein I worship God?" I inquire not, "Do you receive the Supper of the Lord in the same manner and posture that I do, not whether, in the administration of baptism, you agree with me in admitting the sureties for the baptized, in the manner of administering it, or the age of those to whom it should be administered?" Nay, I ask not of you (as clear as I am in my own mind) whether you allow baptism and the Lord's Supper at all. Let it need be, at a more convenient season. My only question at present is this, "Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thine heart?"..."If it be, give me thy hand."⁴⁴

44. Wesley, "Catholic Spirit", in his Works, V, 496-497.

CHAPTER FOUR

UNITED METHODIST VS. WESLEYAN LITURGY

At a recent conference on liturgical theology a number of questions were raised regarding the diversity present in the liturgies of United Methodist churches in general.¹ A related survey indicated that about 15 per cent of these churches had no Scripture reading, 81 per cent had no confession, and 33 per cent voiced no creedal affirmation as part of their regular rituals. Robert W. Thornberg, staff executive for the Division of the Ordained Ministry, warned that: "We continue in a morass of individual idiosyncrasies and fads which will remain unchecked until there is a more broadly based, commonly accepted set of principles and practices that inform our worship."²

In an address on "Spiritual Formation" Don E. Saliers, associate professor of theology at Candler School of Theology, said:

Preaching has been stressed to the neglect of other liturgical ministries in the church. We call the ordained minister a "preacher" and speak of "conducting" worship services. Seminary courses are heavy on communication techniques, illustrations and otherwise, and short on the meditative use of exegesis. All this unwittingly expresses our one-sided formation and accounts for some of the struggles ministries have with inherited images of ministry in the local church.³

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1. The conference on liturgical theology was held in Nashville, Tennessee on October 21-22, 1977.
 2. "Too Much Diversity in Liturgies?", Circuit Rider, II, 3
 3. Higher Education & Ministry Report, (January-February, 1978), 1.

Such criticisms of United Methodist liturgy are not new; the American churches have struggled with liturgical identity since their formation. Certainly this "morass of individual idiosyncrasies and fads" was not what Wesley envisioned for the Methodist churches in America. For the conclusion of this study, the following questions are raised: (1) How did worship deteriorate to such conditions? (2) How has the United Methodist Church moved so far from Wesleyan liturgy?

The answer to the first question may be traced to the liturgical indifference of the Methodist fathers. Wesley's fundamental liturgy for the American churches, the Sunday Service, was abandoned before Wesley's death (1791), out of preference for preaching services. No attempt was made to establish a new liturgical formulary until 1896; for over a century Methodist churches were left without a Discipline-prescribed liturgy. Norwood wrote in The Story of American Methodism that the disappearance of the Sunday Service had more than liturgical significance. He noted:

It is symbolic of the loss of the central concept of the church at the very moment the American societies were becoming a church... Although forms were later provided the damage was done. Many Methodist ministers have felt perfectly free to follow any plan they pleased, with or without the consent of their congregation.⁴

The Book of Discipline implies that with the rejection of the formal

4. Frederick Norwood, The Story of American Methodism, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1964), p. 229.

liturgy, doctrinal standards suffered corresponding diminution.⁵

During most of the nineteenth century the Disciplines published guidelines for "the establishment of uniformity in public worship amongst us (Methodists) on the Lord's Day". Following are the 1808 rubrics, (written under the strong hand of Joshua Soule):

(1) Let the morning service consist of singing, prayer, the reading of a chapter out of the Old Testament, and another out of the New, and preaching.

(2) Let the afternoon service consist of singing, prayer, the reading of one or two chapters out of the Bible, and preaching.

(3) Let the evening service consist of prayer, singing and preaching.

(4) But on the days of administering the Lord's Supper, the two chapters in the morning service may be omitted.

(5) Let the society be met, wherever it is practicable, on the sabbath-day.⁶

Early in the nineteenth century the urban Methodist churches followed these guidelines closely but worship in the rural churches developed in an increasingly unstructured and informal fashion. Rural worship was characterized by hymn-sings, prayer meetings, camp meetings, and Love-feasts. Many of these forms of worship took on the character of revivals containing no liturgy whatsoever. "Formal" worship took place only at quarterly meetings when an ordained elder was present

5. Book of Discipline, (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1972), p. 44.

6. Book of Discipline, (New York: Wilson & Hitt, 1808), p. 45

to administer the sacraments. Increasingly, Wesley's practice of conventional means of grace and worship could not compete with the prayer meeting and revival. In 1854 Philip Schaff wrote:

In worship, Methodism is not satisfied with the usual divinely ordained means of grace. It really little understands the use of the Sacraments, though it adheres traditionally to infant baptism, and four times a year celebrates the Lord's Supper, as a simple commemoration. It has far more confidence in subjective means and exciting impressions than in the more quiet and unobserved but surer work of the old church system of educational religion... These new measures have...nourished a most dangerous distrust of the ordinary means of grace, the calm preaching of the Word and the Sacraments.⁷

In 1896 official measures were taken to restore a measure of trust in "the ordinary means of grace, the calm preaching of the Word, the sacraments." An order of public worship was printed in the front of the Hymnal. This order was adopted by both the Northern and Southern churches and printed in the 1905 joint hymnal of the two dichotomous policies. It included a psalter in the form of responsive readings which marked a return to Wesley's recommendations. This attempt to restore liturgical order evoked much protest and debate. After a century of unstructured liturgy, preference for informal worship was deeply ingrained; worshippers were resistant to a formal liturgy. Nolan B. Harmon wrote:

7. Emory S. Bucke, The History of American Methodism, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1964), III, 611, citing Philip Schaff, America.

The publication of this book (the hymnal) and the adoption of orders of worship caused a storm in many Methodist churches. It not only smacked of formality--it *was* formality. The older generation wondered what the church was coming to.⁸

During the early 1900's when most of the change was taking place, the Methodist Quarterly Review ran article after article, some hailing the changes and others protesting them. Thomas B. Neely supported the formularies, reminding the Methodists that such formulation was an "earnest recommendation...not a command."⁹ C.M. Giggin, on the other hand, feared that the liturgical trends pointed in the direction of Rome, e.g.;

We are aware that those who call for the "enrichment of worship" do not propose to introduce ritualism or go to Rome at once. We simply before we start toward these inherited forms to view the drift in other ages and ask, "If we face toward a certain point, may we not get there?"¹⁰

During the twenty years following the unification of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (1939), the appreciation of traditional orders of worship, prayers and rituals increased in urban churches. A desire was expressed to print a Methodist book of worship. As a result the first Methodist Book of

8. Ibid., citing Nolan B. Harmon, "Methodist Worship: Practice & Ideals".

9. Norwood, p. 327.

10. Ibid.

Worship was issued in 1945 as a companion to the Methodist Hymnal. It contained orders for morning and evening services, (one adopted from Wesley's Sunday Service), prayers, affirmations of faith, orders of worship for special days in the Christian year, prayers for the sick and aids for devotion. It also contained orders for the administration of the sacraments and church offices, and several dedicatory services, e.g.; church-school buildings, hospitals and organs. The Book of Worship has been revised several times, the latest edition being issued in 1964. As this edition was being revised there was a substantial recommendation that the communion order be that of Thomas Cranmer's 1549 service; much of the expression reflects the Anglican Archbishop's elevated English prose.¹¹

The purpose of the Book of Worship is a noble one, and many of the rites and orders are similar to Wesley's formularies. The Preface states:

The Book of Worship is designed to provide significant structure for the worship of the Church. It is not intended in any way to fetter the spontaneity or reject the reliance upon the Holy Spirit which have characterized United Methodist worship throughout its history. Rather, the Book of Worship seeks to claim for the church and its people the total United Methodist heritage in worship. John Wesley himself, by his devotion to the Book of Common Prayer and his ordering of the "Sunday Service of the Methodists in America", has made us heirs of the deeply meaningful historic forms of devotion of the universal Church. As we make these our

11. James F. White, New Forms of Worship, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1961), p. 16.

own we shall find that the Holy Spirit will move among us with mighty power.¹²

The Book of Worship is significant in that it provides a structured liturgy for the United Methodist Church; however, it was designated as being for "optional and voluntary use". Each church is left to structure worship as it pleases, thereby allowing "a morass of individual idiosyncrasies and fads" to continue. This free structure is a congregational trait in an otherwise episcopal system.

According to the statistics cited in the beginning of the chapter a large number of United Methodist churches disregard the Book of Worship's "suggested" Order of Worship; it calls for two scripture readings, a prayer of confession and an affirmation of faith (creedal statement). The omission of any of these items disturbs the ordered liturgy of the Book of Worship; moreover it ignores again Wesley's rubrics for Morning Prayer.

LITURGICAL COMPARISONS

A. Holy Communion

John Wesley was an advocate of "constant communion". He believed that the Lord's Supper was the most effective means of grace which should be received weekly. In order to ensure frequent communion for the American Methodist churches, (he realized constant communion was

12. Book of Worship, (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1964), preface.

impossible in a pioneering situation), Wesley disregarded the Anglican rubric forbidding any but episcopal ordination and ordained ministers himself. This was the act which led to the separation of the Methodists from the Church of England.

The United Methodist attitude toward Holy Communion has varied from time to time. Many of the changes can be traced back to the pioneer American scene. The celebration of the Lord's Supper was provided for by the ordinations at the Christmas Conference (1784). The expectation was that the Lord's Supper would be administered as frequently as possible; but communion was usually administered at the Quarterly Conferences only when an ordained elder was present. The infrequency of communion was not a matter of disinterest in the sacrament; the elders were "stretched to the limits of their energy in getting around the immense circuits" and could not administer it more frequently.¹³ The pattern of quarterly communion became ingrained; the American Methodist churches have never practiced constant or even frequent communion. The Book of Worship stresses that, "It shall be the duty of the pastor to administer the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper at regularly appointed times to the people committed to his care".¹⁴ There is no other direction given in the Book of Worship nor in the Book of Discipline as to when or how often the Lord's Supper should be

13. Norwood, p. 229.

14. Book of Worship, p. 15.

administered. Ministers may follow their personal discretion in this matter; in any local United Methodist Church Holy Communion may be administered weekly, monthly or even yearly, depending upon how important the local church minister believes Holy Communion to be. A minister may by-pass the sacrament because its inclusion in the liturgy necessitates a shorter sermon. When Holy Communion is offered, often the Order for the Administration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper suggested in the Book of Worship is reduced to allow time for a longer sermon. Such usage of the Lord's Supper indicates that Schaff's accusation made a century earlier still applies to the United Methodist Church, e.g.; "Methodism is not satisfied with the usual divinely ordained means of grace. It really little understands the use of the Sacraments..." It is clear that in the United Methodist Church the Service of the Word has almost superseded the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

James F. White charges that the United Methodist Church has "humanized" the sacraments too much; making them our own acts rather than God's acts. He writes:

The sense of the sacraments as sign-acts through which God acts here and now to accomplish his own purposes seems strangely absent in the Lord's Supper. In short, the sacraments have come to depend on human agency--our ability to remember God--rather than what God out of his grace does.¹⁵

15. James F. White, "Our Apostasy in Worship," Christian Century, XCIV, 30, (September 28, 1977), 844.

If one accepts the traditional definition of liturgy as "the work of the people", then one must assume that this attitude is being transmitted through the liturgy. White continues his criticism noting that:

Most of the Reformers of the sixteenth century and John Wesley in the eighteenth were prone to speak of the sacraments as "means of grace" in which the agency is divine. God uses them in his own mysterious way in order to give himself to us according to his own will. In the words of Charles Wesley: "Sure and real is the grace,/ The manner be unknown;/...There to bless, 'tis only ours/ To wonder and adore." Most Methodists seem now to have reversed that to read: "Sure and clear is our recall;/ The manner obvious;/...Ours to remember it all;/ What Christ did long ago.¹⁶

B. Service of the Word - Sermon

Few worshippers would disagree that the sermon has become the focus of United Methodist worship. Saliers affirmed this when he noted that ministers are often called "preachers" who "conduct" worship services. Frequently ministers are judged and their services are measured by the quality of the sermon. Certainly Wesley emphasized excellence in preaching but it seems certain that he never could have condoned the use of the liturgy as a preamble to the sermon. Each item in the liturgy must stand on its own merit.

16. Ibid.

Once again, this primary characteristic of United Methodist worship can be traced to the pioneering days of the church when the preaching service was preferred to Wesley's formal liturgy. James White wrote that many people spoke of "going to the sermon" when they were going to worship.¹⁷ In the preaching service the sermon was prefaced by (1) several hymns and (2) one or two prayers. A large number of United Methodist churches use no more liturgy than that today.

Wesley issued specific directives concerning the content of a sermon, (supra Chapter 3, p. 62). These instructions show that he was far more concerned with the content of the sermon than with the manner in which it was delivered. According to Saliers, seminary courses teach communication techniques and illustrations more than the meditative use of exegesis. Wesley averred that it was the minister's responsibility to "preach the Gospel to every creature". One could infer from this statement that the sermon should focus on the Scriptures. White wrote that the opposite is true; ministers today tend to use Scripture not for its own sake, primarily as proclamation of God's Word to his assembled people, but chiefly as source of the sermon text. He noted:

Most orders of worship would be improved by careful analysis.
What function does each item perform in the service? If we

17. White, New Forms, p. 26.

think this question through, we might be embarrassed into the realization that God's Word is read for a greater purpose than simply to provide the preacher a sermon text or pretext.¹⁸

The same could be said for every item in the liturgy. The United Methodist Church must realize anew that God speaks in ways other than through the sermon.

C. Hymns

One of the anomalies of Methodist worship lies in the use of congregational hymns. When Wesley initiated congregational singing it was viewed by Anglicans as an expression of "enthusiasm" and, indeed, hymns were sung enthusiastically by the Methodists. By 1765 singing had become a central act of worship in the Methodist Societies.¹⁹ Wesley was so anxious to ensure that the congregation was sensitive to the meaning of texts that he frequently stopped in mid-strain to cry: "Stop! Do you know what you said last? Did you speak no more than you felt?"²⁰ The hymns were used didactically; but their elevated poetry also enriched and enlivened the liturgy. There is no evidence that Wesley used hymns at fixed and determinate times; he used them whenever it was seasonable.

18. White, "Our Apostasy", pp. 842-3.

19. Holmes Ambrose, "Anglican Anthems and Roman Catholic Motets of Samuel Wesley", (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1962), p. 13.

20. John Wesley, Works, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), 318

Herein lies the anomaly: the Methodists in America rejected the formal elements in Wesley's liturgies to embrace informal modes of worship. This act produced lasting effects upon United Methodist worship. One of Wesley's more informal liturgical innovations, namely congregational singing, has developed into one of the most formal, stiffly structured and, frequently, meaningless parts of the liturgy. (This is not to suggest that the texts of the hymns themselves were informal. It has been noted already that each word was designed in a "fixed and determinate sense"). A typical United Methodist Order of Worship includes three hymns: (1) a hymn of praise to open the service; (2) a hymn of preparation immediately preceeding the sermon, indicating again that United Methodist liturgy serves as preamble to the sermon; (3) a hymn of dedication to close the service, usually inspired by the sermon. Hymns, it would seem, are seldom chosen for their didactic usefulness. If an unfamiliar hymn is chosen, little time is allowed for the congregation to assimilate it. The worshipper is left to muddle through the music and wonder what was the meaning. Ministers are rare who might halt the hymn in mid-strain to pose Wesley's imperative question.

Ministers often choose "old favorites" not for their didactic value but because of their appeal to congregational nostalgia. Many of these hymns would not meet Wesleys' standards because they contain "vain repetitions" and "polylingualities" which constitute "prayer

without understanding".²¹ The United Methodist Hymnal contains many such hymns, e.g.; "The Old Rugged Cross", "How Great Thou Art", "Standing on the Promises", "Blessed Assurance".

Hymnodic training is fading from the United Methodist Church. Seminaries, if they offer courses in their curriculum, require no course work in the music of the church. Subsequently, because the ministers understand little of the use of hymns in worship, the worshipper learns less and congregational singing is reduced to a "sing-along" habit.

Wesley believed that it was the minister's responsibility to assume musical leadership just as he should assume total responsibility for the liturgy. His own direction of leading singers is recorded at Londonderry on Monday, June 17, 1771:

I met the singers here for the last time. I joined them together two years ago, but as the preachers following them took no care or thought about them, they of course flew asunder. And no wonder, for no thing will stand in the Methodist system unless the preacher has his heart and hand in it. Every preacher, therefore, should consider it not his business to mind this or that thing only, but everything.²²

21. John Wesley, Journal, (London: Epworth Press, 1938), VI, 182.

22. Ibid., VIII, 63.

CONCLUSION

Several conclusions and observations may be drawn from this study. The majority of Wesley's liturgical formularies and innovations were conceived during his missionary tenure in Georgia, in a pioneer community. He used the new colony as a place for his liturgical experimentation. Despite Wesley's attempt to develop liturgies appropriate to pioneer circumstances the pioneer American Methodist churches rejected most of Wesley's formularies because they were too "formal". It must be noted that Wesley was a well-educated Oxford scholar; his liturgical formularies reflect the influence of his wide reading as well. The average American Methodist churchman, rather than being well-educated, often was semi-literate. These preachers were uncomfortable with a formal liturgy because they did not understand its meaning. Certainly they had no knowledge of the writings of the Church Fathers nor could they understand Wesley's justification of many of his innovations by his appeal to the Primitive Church.

The transition of the American Methodist bands from societies to churches occurred in an era when feelings against England were high. Wesley was, after all, an Englishman who had expressed his disapproval of American independence; despite his adaption of the liturgy for American usage, his liturgical formularies were basically a revision of the English liturgy, The Book of Common Prayer, and therefore

suspect. Wesleyan liturgy was rejected by American Methodists therefore out of (1) ignorance and (2) distaste for anything English.

While this explains why the American Methodist church in 1786 had no formal liturgy it does not explain why the United Methodist Church in 1978 retains substantially the same position. There is no longer the tension that existed in 1786 between England and the United States. United Methodist ministers are among the best educated clergy in Christianity--save in one area, namely, worship. Few United Methodist seminaries require courses in hymnody, although this important subject is usually listed as an elective. The same is true for the study of liturgy; many ministers are graduated from seminary without adequate exposure to liturgical history and formulation. The School of Theology at Claremont, academically the most highly rated United Methodist seminary in the country, does not require a course in worship for graduation.²³ One may conclude, therefore, that the United Methodist Church continues to de-emphasize a strong liturgy out of choice or ignorance, the same reasons deduced for the Church's rejection of Wesley's Sunday Service two hundred years ago.

A second conclusion to be drawn from this study is that loose, informal liturgy conveys loose, informal doctrine. Wesley insisted that each item in his liturgy must convey "right teaching" and each item must stand on its own merit; ie., it should teach doctrine in its own right. Nothing in Wesley's writings could be construed to

23. Liturgical study is included in the required "Foundations of Preaching".

allow liturgy to serve as a mere lead-in to the sermon. Because of the nature of its structure, namely as a springboard to the sermon, the United Methodist liturgy does not teach doctrine at all, unless the sermon be didactic rather than exhortative. This is a critical point when one realizes that the majority of church members are present only at Sunday morning worship. If worshippers are not learning doctrine through the liturgy, then in all likelihood, they are not learning doctrine at all.

The skeleton of Methodism was Anglican and that Reformation foundation was fleshed out by Wesley's patristic methodology. In content, Wesley's teachings were eclectic and in methodology they were highly pragmatic. The genius of Methodism lies not in its content but in its methodology. United Methodism is a "how to do it" religion. If that identity is lost then our identity as Methodists is lost, as will be the genius of our denomination. It is crucial to the survival of United Methodism that we re-capture both the content and spirit of Wesley's "reformed" liturgy. Wesley's liturgical formulary is the method by which this could be done.

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